

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L 0727

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, IS, EG, XF
SUBJECT: DMC FACTION AT POINT OF DIVISION: RUBINSTEIN SEEKS
EMBASSY COUNSEL

REF: TEL AVIV 666

1. AMNON RUBINSTEIN, LEADER OF THE SHINUI FACTION
WITHIN THE DMC, CALLED ON DCM AT THE EMBASSY EVENING
OF JANUARY 15 AFTER ASKING FOR AN URGENT APPOINTMENT
TO DISCUSS A CRUCIAL DECISION THAT HE AND HIS SHINUI
COLLEAGUES HAD TO MAKE. CONVERSATION THAT ENSUED SHOULD
OBVIOUSLY BE TREATED AS HIGHLY SENSITIVE.

2. RUBINSTEIN BEGAN THE MEETING BY DISCLOSING THAT
HE AND FOUR OTHER MEMBERS OF THE SHINUI GROUP WERE IN
THE PROCESS OF DECIDING WHETHER OR NOT TO LEAVE THE
DMC IMMEDIATELY. THEY CONSIDERED THE ROLE PLAYED BY
THE DMC LEADERSHIP, DURING THE CONSIDERATION OF NEW
ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN THE SINAI BY THE KNESSET FOREIGN
AFFAIRS AND SECURITY COMMITTEE, TO BE THE LAST STRAW
AS FAR AS THEY ARE CONCERNED. RUBINSTEIN RECALLED
THAT ONE VOTE IN THE COMMITTEE HAD GOVE AGAINST
HIS POSITION BY 12 TO 10, WITH ONE DMC MEMBER AB-
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STAINING AND ANOTHER ACTUALLY VOTING AGAINST.

3. HE POINTED OUT THAT THE SETTLEMENTS ISSUE WAS
THE ONE POINT ON WHICH THE DMC WAS ABLE TO EXTRACT
ANY CONCESSION FROM THE GOVERNMENT BEFORE JOINING THE
COALITION, AND THAT FOR THE DMC LEADERSHIP TO HAVE
SQUANDERED THE FIRST OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE ITS INFLUENCE

FELT ON THIS SUBJECT WAS HUMILIATING. THE EXPERIENCE HAS BROUGHT HIMSELF AND THE FOUR OTHERS TO THE POINT OF DECISION.

4. RUBINSTEIN STRESSED, HOWEVER, THAT THE LAST THING HE WANTS TO DO IS ENDANGER THE PEACE PROCESS. BY HIS ESTIMATION, IF HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES DEFECT FROM THE PARTY NOW IT WOULD INVOLVE THE LOSS OF ONE DMC PORTFOLIO AND COULD PROVOKE A GOVERNMENT CRISES--PROBABLY THIS WEEK. HE HAD COME TO THE EMBASSY, THEREFORE, TO SEEK SOME "FRIENDLY AND UNOFFICIAL" ADVICE AS TO WHETHER THE NEXT TWO WEEKS WERE VIEWED AS CRITICAL TO THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS.

5. DCM EMPHASIZED HIS DISCOMFORT AS A US GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL DISCUSSING WITH A MEMBER OF KNESSET ACTIONS HE MIGHT TAKE IN THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL ARENA. DCM THEN WENT ON TO SAY THAT IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO EVALUATE BEFORE THE JERUSALEM TALKS EVEN BEGIN WHETHER A GIVEN TIME SEGMENT COULD BE DESCRIBED AS "CRITICAL." OBVIOUSLY, HOWEVER, THE SECRETARY OF STATE WOULD NOT BE PLANNING TO COME IF HE DID NOT CONSIDER THOSE TALKS TO BE EXTREMELY IMPORTANT. DCM ADDED, SPEAKING AS AN OBSERVER ON THE SCENE, THAT HE FOUND IT HARD TO IMAGINE ANY GOVERNMENT WANTING TO CONFRONT AN INTERNAL CRISIS AT A PERIOD SUCH AS THE GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL FINDS ITSELF IN CONFIDENTIAL

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NOW. IT SEEMED CLEAR THAT ANYONE WOULD BE SHOULDERING A VERY HEAVY RESPONSIBILITY IF HE WERE TO SHAKE THE MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT AT THIS POINT.

6. DCM CLOSED BY SUGGESTING, COMPLETELY OFF-THE-RECORD AND PERSONALLY, THAT RUBINSTEIN WAIT A WEEK OR TEN DAYS TO SEE WHAT HAPPENS IN THE JERUSALEM TALKS. HE POINTED OUT THAT SANITY HAD EVENTUALLY PREVAILED DURING THE COURSE OF THW EEKEND AND THAT ONE SHOULD BE OPTIMISTIC THAT IT WOULD CONTINUE TO DO SO AS EVENTS UNFOLD.

7. THIS MORNING'S PRESS CONFIRMS THAT DMC DISSENTERS ARE EXPECTED TO DECIDE TODAY, JANUARY 16, WHETHER TO SPLIT AND FOR A SEPARATE KNESSET FACTION. ALTHOUGH RUBINSTEN MENTIONED FIVE AS THE NUMBER IN HIS GROUP, JERUSALEM POST MENTIONS ONLY HIM, TOLEDANO, WERTHEIMER AND WIRSHUBSKY. FIFTH, IF AVAILABLE, WOULD BE EITHER ATASHI OR ALGERBELI.

8. COMMENT: RUBINSTEIN'S ACTION IN SEEKING ADVICE ON SUCH A MATTER FROM A FOREIGN EMBASSY IS REFLECTIVE OF THE LEVEL OF HIS CURRENT FRUSTRATION WITH THE DMC

LEADERSHIP AS WELL AS PERHAPS INDICATING A CERTAIN
POLITICAL NAIVETE, CHARMING AND FLATTERING AS IT MAY
BE.
LEWIS

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